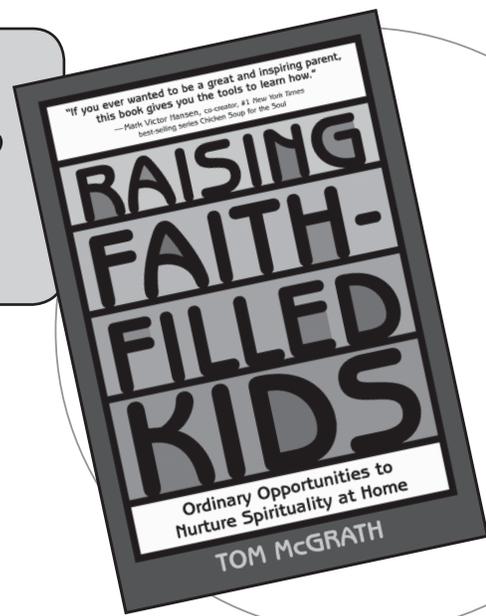


How to Be a Genuine, Spiritual Parent



Keep showing up. When we show up in life, it allows our kids to show up too. This commitment doesn't mean you have to become one-dimensional, living only for your kids. When you show up, arrive as a fully functioning, well-rounded adult who has friends, is involved in the community, knows how to have fun, and pursues his or her own interests. That's the person you show up as. You don't have to be with your kids every hour of every day. But show up regularly and at important times, like at dinnertime.

Ask for help from God and other people. Other people are often the conduits of God's messages and God's immediate help. They offer us the opportunity to love others and to learn about those foibles in us that block us from the free flow of God's love. Other people offer us the opportunity to receive love and mercy and comfort and wisdom.

Practice acceptance. A lot of modern life is driven by an increasing expectation that you should "have it all." If from the time you are young, society's great information engines are gearing you up for the "you can have it all" existence, taking on the responsibility of caring for a helpless, messy, demanding, dependent person can come as a shock to the system. Acceptance is an act of the will. You say, "I will take on the demands and joys of this life with my whole heart, mind, and soul." Acceptance is taking life on life's terms. Acceptance is acknowledging down deep that you are right where God wants you to be and that you have everything you need to live in peace.

Be open. I love the line in the Bible that says, "And Mary treasured all these things in her heart." A lot of surprising events came Mary's way, not the least of which was the discovery that she was "with child" and, oh, what a child! She encountered many joyful, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries in the course of being a parent, and perhaps her greatest example is that she found a way to be open to all those mysteries—not to understand them or to control the outcomes, but to be open to them.